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Research in Developmental Disabilities



Governmental disability welfare expenditure and national economic growth from 1991 to 2006 in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the present study were to describe the welfare expenditure for people with disabilities and examine its relation to national economic growth from 1991 to 2006 in Taiwan. We analyzed data mainly from the information of population with disabilities, disability welfare expenditure and national economic growth and gross national product (GNP) per capita in Taiwan from 1991 to 2006. The percentage and overtime trend were used to examine the change in disability welfare expenditure, national economic growth and GNP per capita. Taiwan's economy continued its steady expansion on record an annual average growth of 5.4% and GNP per capita of 5.7% for the year 1991–2006. At the same period of time, the registered population with disabilities increased nearly five times (204,158 persons in 1991 to 981,015 persons in 2006), the government disability welfare expenditure was dramatically increasing to over 10 times from 1991 to 2006 (US\$ 74 million to US\$ 784 million). Although the total disability budget increased, the beneficiary of the individual with disability increased only 2.2 times. In the content of annual welfare budget for people with disabilities, it is difficult to figure out the increase pattern of the budget growth. However, the local government plays a vital role in disability welfare services gradually, it provides more than 85% welfare budget for people with disabilities. Finally, the author emphasizes that government should examine the long term effects of welfare budget allocation shifting from central government to local government to ensure the right of people with disabilities.

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1. Introduction

The concept of social assistance is at the core of the ideology for the emerging Taiwan welfare state for people with disabilities (Lin, Wu, & Yen, 2004). This social assistance mainly includes disability living allowance assistance, community or institutional care, employment training, social insurance premium auxiliary, etc. In Taiwan, the concept of community services for people with disability is on the crossroad, but institutionalized care still dominates the development of services for people with disabilities (Loh et al., 2007). The number of disability institutions was increasing from 223 to 254 and yield an increasing rate 12.2% from 2000 to 2007. The service capacity of institutional care was 16,664 persons in 2002, and it was increasing to 20,707 persons in 2007 (increase rate = 24.3%). The cases admitted to institutional care were increasing from 12,611 in 2002 to 17,002 in 2007 (increase rate = 34.8%) (Yen, Lin, Wu, & Kang, 2009).

Our previous studies focus on health care issues for people with disabilities found that the lack of health care policy for persons with disabilities is a reflection of health care provision in Taiwan. Health care provision problems will limit persons with disabilities in their access to the health care system (Lin et al., 2004). In 2001, we conducted a total of 1071 people registered with intellectual disabilities in Taiwan found that most of the carers subjectively characterized the overall health status of people with ID as good–excellent (Lin et al., 2006). However, people with intellectual disabilities carry a burden of diseases greater than that of the general population. Nearly half (47.7%) of the subjects reported having an illness in the past 7 months. Most of the morbidity was associated with neurological, psychiatric, digestive, dermatological and cardiovascular diseases or disorders. One-third of subjects took medication regularly and 15% were ‘Major Illness’ card beneficiaries. These data provide evidence that the authority government should examine not only health policy but also social welfare policy to meet the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, the previous *Living Status Survey for People with Disabilities Surveys* conducted by Taiwan governments (MOI, 2004, 2007) illustrated that the disability living allowance and assistance (social welfare budget) was one of the spotlights which were required to be re-evaluated by people with disabilities in Taiwan. However, it is lacking the general profile and over time trend analysis of the social welfare expenditure for people with disabilities in Taiwan. Therefore, the purposes of the present study were to analyze the welfare expenditure for people with disabilities included annual total disability budget, individual beneficiary, and over time trends of the budget change, and we also provide the relationship between social welfare budget and national economic growth from 1991 to 2006 in Taiwan.

2. Methods

Persons with disabilities referred to the cases whose functions of participating in the society and engaging in the production activities are restricted or cannot be brought into full participation due to physical or mental factors, according to Article 3 ‘Physically and Mentally Disabled Citizens Protection Act’ (1997) in Taiwan. There are 16 types of registered disabilities currently in Taiwan. Those cases with disabilities classified and defined by the health authorities, and then registered by the social welfare authorities for the living support beneficiary. In Articles 40, 41 and 58 illustrated that to assist the disabled to obtain continuous care, the governments shall provide or consolidate the resources to provide the home services, community services and welfare institutional care for the disabled. The Article 38 of the Act regulates the governments shall, according to the disability type and level, and family economic conditions of the disabled, provide the disabled with subsidies for their living, nursing, maintenance, and other expenses necessary for their welfare. Therefore, the governments should provide annual disability welfare budget to enforce this Act to protect the legal rights, interests, and livelihood of the disabled, secure their opportunity to participate in the social life fairly (Article 1). We analyzed data for the present study mainly from two sources; one is from 1991 to 2006 disability welfare expenditure and population with disabilities (MOI Department of Social Affairs, 2008; MOI Department of Statistics, 2008a, 2008b). Another data source came from National Income Statistics Yearbook 2006 (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2007). It illustrated the national economic growth and gross national product (GNP) per capita in Taiwan from 1991 to 2006.

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